

Washington, DC-Today Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted in favor of S.352, the "DTV Delay Act," which would postpone the date of the analog-to-digital television transition from February 17, 2009, to June 12, 2009. In Rodriguez's Congressional district 3,868 residents are on a waiting list to receive coupons to help offset the cost of purchasing digital television converter boxes, which allow an analog television set that relies on over-the-air reception to display digital signals.

"All across my vast district and especially in our low income, elderly, rural, and border communities, the transition from analog to digital television has been unfair and not as simple as it should have been," said Rodriguez. "There is a digital to analog divide and until we can bring it together in our communities, then we should not make this transition."

Under current law, all full-power television stations are required to cease analog broadcasts, subjected to limited exceptions, on February 17, 2009. As the transition date has drawn near, it has become apparent that the existing programs created in the previous Presidential administration to support the transition have been insufficient. 1.8 million people nationwide are on the waiting list to receive coupons.

Unless the transition date is delayed, millions of Americans may see their televisions "go dark" on February 18, 2009. Some advocates have noted that it will disproportionately impact low income, rural, and elderly Americans.

In recognition of this pending consumer crisis, on January 8, 2009, John Podesta, co-chair of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, on behalf of President-elect Obama, wrote the leaders of the House and Senate Commerce Committees to request that Congress take steps to delay the transition so that expected consumer problems could be fixed.

"Supporting this delay will be especially important to people who depend on getting their news and information from television, especially when they don't have other media immediately available," Rodriguez added.

The bill passed the House by a vote of 264-158 and will now be sent to President Obama for his signature.